



Representative

Jerome Delvin (R) 8th District

A Report on the 2002 Legislative Session

May 2002

House Committee Assignments:

Juvenile Justice - Ranking Republican
Agriculture & Ecology
Technology, Telecommunications
& Energy

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Dear Friends,

As you read this, I will be well into an American expedition to scale the Nepalese Himalayan peak of Manaslu, the eighth-highest summit on Earth. Before I left Richland, and was looking back on the just-completed legislative session, it occurred to me that climbing mountains and serving as a legislator are similar in some fundamental ways.

To have a chance of summitting, a mountain climber must have strong discipline, a good plan, the ability to make tough decisions, and the willingness to put individual interests and goals aside for the good of the group. To be effective, legislators must do the same – with the “group” being the people of Washington.

By those standards, the 2002 legislative session fell far short. We faced a mountain of debt in January, and had a chance to conquer it. But when presented with the opportunity to lead, the Seattle-area Democrats who control our lawmaking process didn't have the discipline, or a good plan. Instead, they took the first convenient short cut that would get them away from Olympia, leaving the difficult decisions for the next team.

Please take a few minutes to read this brief report on some of the peaks and valleys of the session. It has been a great privilege to serve again as your state representative these past two years, and I look forward to seeing and talking with you after I return to this side of the world.

Sincerely,

Jerome Delvin

Transportation package headed for the ballot

It wasn't until the final minutes of the 2002 session that Senate and House members agreed to put a long-discussed transportation funding package before the people.

The referendum that will be on your Nov. 5 ballot is expected to raise \$7.7 billion statewide over 10 years. It calls for a 9 cent-per-gallon gas tax increase (for a total of 32 cents; the state gas tax has been 23 cents per gallon since 1991) and a 30 percent increase on weight fees on trucks over 10,000 pounds GVW. Both tax increases will be phased in over two years. The revenue from the gas tax, as required by the state Constitution, can only go to highway construction projects around the state.

The ballot measure also would raise the sales tax on vehicles by 1 percent, to pay for transit, rail, freight mobility and a number of other projects not eligible for gas-tax money.

House Republicans proposed a package that also would generate revenue for transportation investments but included something that is missing from the Democrats' transportation referendum: adequate assurances that new tax money will be spent more efficiently than it is now. I voted against the version that was adopted, because I see it as a "lemon" that won't give our taxpayers what they expect.

New budget repeats old budget's mistakes

If we are called back to Olympia later this year, as some are already predicting, it will mean the state's budget situation has gotten even worse. I hope not, because the Democrats used up all their accounting tricks during the regular session. They would have to look at huge tax increases, or huge cuts in vital public services.

One of those anticipating our return is the state auditor, a Democrat, who witnessed the same irresponsibility I saw. We started the regular session in January with a shortfall of more than \$1 billion in the state's operating budget. Sixty days later, the Democrats had not only failed to fix the problem – they had made it worse, by adopting a budget that spends \$1.4 billion more than the state expects to collect in revenue.

Here are the "accounting tricks" the Democrats used to fill that huge gap and get out of Olympia with what they call a "balanced" budget.

First, they voted to raid the state's emergency reserve fund, taking \$325 million to pay for day-to-day expenses and leaving only \$53 million, and adopted a tax increase of another \$21 million.

Second, they voted to take at least \$1 billion of Washington's future payments from the national tobacco settlement, and exchange it for about \$450 million to toss in the budget hole. Money that could have (and should have) gone toward public health care and smoking-prevention efforts over the next 30 years will be gone, spent to operate state government, in 14 months. In its place, the taxpayers will take on a 30-year debt. No wonder the state treasurer and attorney general, both Democrats, have criticized this quick-cash scheme.

Finally, in order to pass the budget, the Democrats essentially did away with the protections from Initiative 601. Now it takes only a simple majority vote, not a vote by two-thirds of legislators, to increase your taxes and tap what's left of the emergency reserve fund.

I went to Olympia expecting to help make the difficult choices that would bring spending back in line with revenue. That didn't happen. By the Democrats' own admission, this budget will leave taxpayers with a \$1 billion shortfall at the start of the next biennium – and that's if the state doesn't go completely in the red before the end of the year.

Here's what some of Washington's daily newspapers and elected officials have said about using tobacco-settlement money to fill the hole in the state's operating budget:

"The state should be ashamed..." – *Tri-City Herald* editorial (4/5/02)

"cockeyed...create(s) many more problems than it solves"

– *Yakima Herald-Republic* editorial (3/8/02)

"not sustainable" – *Spokesman-Review* editorial (3/6/02)

"a bad deal for Washington taxpayers"

– *Attorney General Christine Gregoire (Seattle P-I, 3/05/02)*

"terrible fiscal policy" – *State Treasurer Mike Murphy (Bremerton Sun, 3/8/02)*

Report to the 8th District



Working with our communities to respond to Hanford growth

Hanford's waste glassification plant project is expected to bring more than 7,000 people to our area, and increase the demand for public services. More people means more cars on our roads, more traffic problems, more accidents, more police calls, more injuries and so on.

For months I worked with our local government officials on how to handle this increased demand for services. The result was House Bill 2941, which would have funneled state taxes collected on the construction project into a special account to help affected communi-

ties pay for the extra load on their services. It would have been worth about \$2 million a year through 2010. The House passed my legislation unanimously, but the Senate did not act on the bill.

We were left with one alternative: help our communities save money already in their budgets, by including \$2 million in the state's capital budget for the Benton County justice center-jail renovation. The budget passed, freeing up \$2 million that now can be put toward responding to the Hanford-related growth.

More help for children

The welfare of our children is one of my highest priorities as a legislator, especially as ranking Republican member of the House Juvenile Justice & Family Law Committee. Here are two bills I advocated this session, with different results:

Senate Bill 6641: It's estimated that more than 2,000 students in Washington have diabetes that must be managed sometime during school hours. Younger children with this illness often are not able to manage their insulin needs throughout a school day, and most school districts do not have a nurse in every building to help them.

As a type 2 diabetic, I understand the importance of diabetes management. That's why I worked

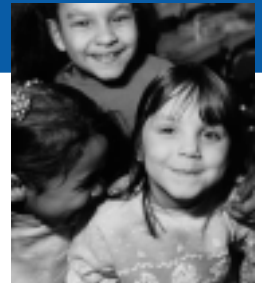
to secure support in the House for SB 6641, which mandates closer supervision of diabetic students and greater awareness among adults in our schools. It requires school districts to develop policies on diabetes management, and each diabetic student to have an individual health plan describing his or her specific management. Also, parents may designate and train adults to assist their children in managing his or her diabetes. The measure passed the Legislature unanimously.

House Bill 2371: Unfortunately, I had less success with legislation I introduced to raise the age of consent for children receiving chemical dependency and mental health treatment. My bill would have made 16 the age of consent, instead of 13.

HB 2371 would have helped not only parents but also our juvenile

justice system. Younger teens would no longer be able to check themselves out of treatment facilities to which their parents admitted them, or avoid entering a treatment program by refusing to allow the release of their medical records.

Representatives of the Benton-Franklin Juvenile Court and the Benton-Franklin Counties Children's Behavioral Health Network went over to Olympia to testify before the Juvenile Justice & Family Law Committee. However, the committee did not take a vote.



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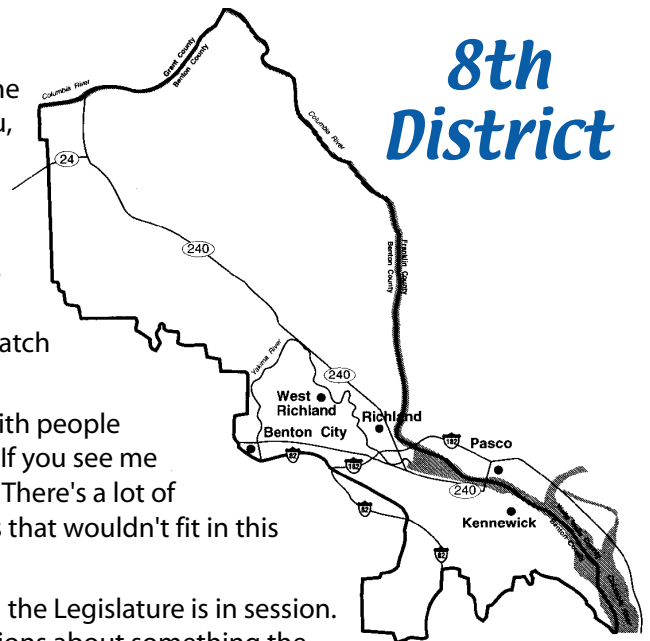
Between now and November

Because all 98 seats in the House (including mine) will be on the ballot in November, I am limited to two legislative "mailings" to you, my constituents, in 2002. This is the second one, so there are a few things I need to cover.

I occasionally hear from people who have received incorrectly addressed newsletters from me. I apologize for any inconvenience that causes. The address list is obtained from a private vendor, and based on county voter records. Unfortunately, it can take time to catch up with address and name changes. Please bear with me.

This summer and fall I intend to spend a lot of time meeting with people around the 8th District. Hopefully I'll get a chance to talk with you. If you see me first, and want to let me know what's on your mind, don't hesitate. There's a lot of information about the budget and transportation and other issues that wouldn't fit in this report.

Remember, I am your representative all the time, not just when the Legislature is in session. If you need help dealing with a government agency, or have questions about something the Legislature did this year, please send me a letter or e-mail, or call. I am always happy to hear from you.



INSIDE:

- New budget, old mistakes
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- Keeping up with growth
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